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Letting Luce With Clare Boothe

Drawing a Self-Portrait With Wit & Words

By Sarah Booth Conroy

Clare Boothe Luce has not so much lived her life as written it as an epigram. She was born with the gift of intelligence and the curse of seeing the world as ludicrous.

"Without a tragic view of life, you can't find it as funny as I do," she said last night. "The difference between a pessimist and an optimist is that the pessimist is better informed."

Last night, five weeks after her 80th birthday, the wit and the beauty were holding up well at a verbal "Self-Portrait at the National Portrait Gallery." Those of the about

300 guests who came expecting a drawing room dialogue from the famous playwright of "The Women" were not disappointed.

Neither were those who came to hear the Republican politician and diplomat who was a member of Congress from Connecticut and an ambassador to Rome. Today she is a consultant to the National Security Council, a member of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, and an amazing combination of a grande dame and an *enfant terrible*.

Paying tribute to her past and her present was an appreciative group that included three CIA directors, two past and one present—William Colby, Richard Helms and William Casey—the Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin, the Architect of the Capitol George White, former Nixon secretary Rosemary Woods and Luce biographer Sylvia Morris.

In fine form, shimmering with sequins, wearing enough pearls to decimate a bed of oysters, Luce ranged with Marc Pachter, the National Portrait Gallery's historian, over her var-

ious starring roles with words about the costars and the bit players in the road company of her life. She spoke much about the cheers and a bit about the boos.

She neatly dug a grave for the long-standing rumor that George Kaufman had written parts of "The Women," her biggest hit. "He used to say, 'Do you think that if I'd written a play that made \$3 million, I would've put her name on it?'"

When she was in Congress, she said, "someone was always saying that my husband [Henry Luce, owner of Time-Life] had his staffers write my speeches for me. But it all balanced out, sometimes people said I wrote his editorials for him."

Listening to her last night, it is doubtful that anyone would dare write anything for her. Looking at Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, sitting on a front seat at the discussion, she gave a mild example of the sort of thing that made many enemies in her career. She chastised Weinberger for popularizing the phrase "build-down."

"The secretary is a great patriot," she said, "but he would certainly do the country a favor if he would get rid of 'build-down.'"

She said she learned at a party recently that former senator J. William Fulbright had never forgiven her for the time she corrected his use of imply and infer. And she told about the congressman who told one of her verbal victims not to mind her because "her real vocation is writing. She attaches meaning to the use of words."

Luce told of a time she met her match. "When 'The Women' was a success in London, I was brave enough to ask Sylvia Astor to introduce me to George Bernard Shaw. I wrote out in my mind what I was going to say."

But when she was shown into Shaw's study, he ignored her for so long she forgot her speech. "I just blurted out, 'Mr. Shaw, if it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here . . .'" He looked at me and said, "And what is your mother's name?"

Pachter asked Luce which of her many roles she preferred. She said the most wonderful was to be mother to

her daughter, who was killed in a car accident at 19. Luce said she mourned the grandchildren she might have had.

And in a characteristic shift, from dark to light, she went on to say she was proudest of learning scuba diving after she was 50.

"I took a certain pride in that President Eisenhower gave me 14 missions to accomplish as ambassador to Italy. And I accomplished 15—I persuaded Italy and Yugoslavia to settle their territorial dispute. I believe it is the only border disagreement since World War II solved short of war."

Luce admitted that her first ambition was to be a playwright despite her subsequent diplomatic career. In conversation after the formal dialogue, she said she has a play "gestating. But you know the kind of life we lead often acts as an abortion to the creative impulse."

It is said no woman can be too thin or too rich. Last night, it seemed that Luce, who is neither fat nor poor, could have ruled the world—if she had not also been too beautiful and too witty.

CONTINUED

Reagan Pushes MX As Arms-Cuts Device

Lobbying for the MX missile, President Reagan insisted yesterday that "I do want arms control," and dismissed suggestions that his commitment isn't sincere as "amateur psychoanalysis."

"I can't believe that this world can go on . . . with this kind of weapon on both sides, poised at each other, without some day some fool or some maniac or some accident triggering a war that is the end of the line for all of us," Reagan told a group of business executives at the White House.

Reagan said the United States must build up its strategic forces to put pressure on the Soviet Union to negotiate arms reductions and maintain peace.

The session with the business executives was the latest step in a drive by Reagan to win congressional approval of funds for the 10-warhead nuclear MX.

Meanwhile, in a counterattack, two former directors of

the CIA warned that deploying the MX would put a hair-trigger on nuclear war because both the United States and Soviet Union would be tempted to fire first for fear of losing their missiles to such a silo-busting weapon.

William E. Colby and Stansfield Turner, CIA directors in the Nixon and Carter administrations, respectively, sounded that warning in a news conference called by Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.), one of six announced contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination, to launch what he called "a national mobilization to stop the MX missile."

Congress should "get rid of this particularly dangerous weapon and put to rest any prospect that we would go for a first-strike strategy," Colby said.

The Soviets, Turner said, would be "nervous" about the possibility of the United States launching the MX against Soviet targets.

"They will have to have their finger on the trigger," he said, to guard against losing their missiles to a first strike, while the United States will have to do the same thing for fear of losing the MX in a surprise blow.



Larry Lamber/Washington Times

Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo. (left), with former CIA directors William Colby and Stansfield Turner (right) voices opposition at Capitol Hill press conference to administration's plans for MX missile development and deployment.

Critics call for MX plan's rejection

By Thomas D. Brandt
and William Kling
WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

Foreign policy, intelligence and defense experts from prior administrations joined congressional critics of the MX missile yesterday, urging rejection of President Reagan's development and deployment plans.

Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo., announcing a "Stop the MX" campaign at a Capitol Hill press conference, said those who support the nuclear freeze or arms control should reject MX because it "represents a substantial escalation of the arms race."

William Colby, CIA director under President Nixon, said MX could only be used for a first-strike attack against the Soviets, or for "launch on warning" of an attack from them, strategies disavowed by the United States.

And former CIA director Stansfield Turner, who served under President Carter, said that deployment of the MX would destabilize superpower relations

because of its possible first-strike use, forcing the Soviets "to keep their finger on the trigger."

Rep. Les AuCoin, D-Ore., called for rejection of the "so-called bargain" that Reagan struck in letters to congressmen last week, trading congressional approval of funds for MX for the president's pledge to seek an arms-control agreement.

Speaking with Hart, Rep. Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo., asked how it is possible that administration spokesmen profess to be "most interested in peace when they are lusting after new weapons systems."

Reagan, speaking in the East Room of the White House to more than 200 corporate chief executive officers, said, "I know it sounds silly — to build a missile in order to get rid of a missile — but we're very dangerously close to not having the deterrent that we need to keep the other fellow from using his, or at least using them, for blackmail."

The president asked the businessmen to contact their congressmen to urge their support for MX, and spoke at some

length on strategic matters.

"I do want arms control. I can't believe that this world can go on beyond our generation and on down to succeeding generations with this kind of weapon on both sides poised at each other without someday some fool or some maniac or some accident triggering the kind of war that is the end of the line for all of us."

Before the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee yesterday former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara called for no MX procurement funds in the 1984 budget.

Vance, who served under Carter and McNamara, who served under President Kennedy, also called for limiting the 1984 defense budget increase to 5 percent by eliminating "expensive duplication of programs" of which MX is one.

"We're not suggesting we cut \$136 billion for social programs or to let taxes be cut," said McNamara. He said he is recommending the reduction because, "I don't think we need it."

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STATINTL

The Calendar

Tuesday

Several prominent Roman Catholics will hold a forum on the impact of a pastoral letter in which Roman Catholic bishops called for a halt in the production and deployment of nuclear arms. Participating will be William E. Colby, former director of Central Intelligence; Lieut. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency; Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat of Vermont; Representative Dan Lungren, Republican of California, and the Rev. J. Bryan Hehir. 8 P.M., St. Peter's Church, Capitol Hill.

Marjorie Hunter

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